



**COMPREHENSIVE
EDUCATION
GUIDE FOR NEW
IOWANS**



ABOUT LATINOS CAN

Latinos Can is an initiative of the Office of Latino Affairs in partnership with various statewide agencies and organizations dedicated to eliminating the Latino education gap in Iowa.



Office of Latino Affairs
Iowa Department of Human Rights

The work of Latinos Can is supported in large part by Iowa College Aid grant funds. Iowa College Aid provides funding, training and technical assistance to develop LCANs around the State of Iowa.



Iowa College Aid
Iowa College Student Aid Commission

SPECIAL THANKS

This guide could not have been completed without the help of several of our community partners. Each with their own area of expertise they helped to make this guide

Logos go here

Special thanks to whoever else helped to write this etc

PURPOSE OF THE GUIDE

This guide is intended for parents who are new to Iowa (immigrants, refugees, migrants). This guide will take you through the structure of the educational system in Iowa, responsibilities of parents, responsibilities of schools, parent and student rights, and helpful tips and resources for families. This guide will be made available in multiple languages and formats.

FOR QUESTIONS CONTACT:
CECILIA MARTINEZ
PROGRAM COORDINATOR
515-725-1140
CECILIA.MARTINEZ@IOWA.GOV
WWW.HUMANRIGHTSIOWA.GOV/CAS/LA

INDEX

Laws in the United States and Iowa 1
Right to Interpretation 2
Communication with Schools 3-4
FERPA 5
Rights of Undocumented Students and Families 6-7
Student Civil Rights 8-9
LGBTQ Student Rights 10-12
Disability Rights 13-16
EL Students 17-18
Student Conduct and Discipline 19-23
Attendance and Truancy 24-25
Clothing 26
Harassment and Bullying 17-31
Grade Levels 32-22
Open Enrollment

LAWS IN THE UNITED STATES & IOWA

Laws are written at all levels of government and affect many parts of our daily lives. Throughout this guide you will learn about the laws that impact your child's education and you as a parent. These laws not only tell you what you shouldn't do but they also give you rights.

Laws obligate schools and individuals to behave in a certain way when it comes to the education of students. This also applies to parents and the students themselves.

Federal Law: These laws apply to everyone who lives in the United States. The United States has a law making branch and a judicial branch that interprets and applies the law.

Federal laws tend to deal with the following:

- Immigration Law
- Social Security and Supplemental Income Law
- Anti-discrimination laws
- Federal Criminal Laws

State Law: Each state has it's own system of laws and courts. All Federal laws apply at the state level but states have the ability to add onto those laws. In Iowa our laws are found in our state code. For example, Iowa has added protections to their Civil Rights code that are not in the Federal Civil Rights code.

State Laws tend to deal with the following:

- Criminal matters
- Welfare and public assistance
- Divorce and family matters
- Workers rights

Local Law: Individual cities and towns can also create laws to govern their specific area. All Federal and State laws apply at this level. This includes School Boards who create policies, similar to laws, for local schools. They also serve as a kind of judicial or court system if issues arise in a district.

RIGHT TO INTERPRETATION

If English is not your primary language or if you are more comfortable communicating in your native language, you have the right to interpretation in schools.

THE LAW

Iowa Code states that any educational institution, such as a school, cannot discriminate against anyone "on the basis of race, creed, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, religion, or disability in any program or activity"(1).

The category of 'national origin' grants the right to language access for parents and students.

SCHOOL'S RESPONSIBILITIES

Schools have an obligation to communicate with all parents adequately and meaningfully. For parents who are **Limited English proficient (LEP)** this means providing them with language assistance such as translated materials or an interpreter. Translated materials should be accurate and interpreters should be competent. Schools should not be asking your children to act as interpreters for you (2). Only qualified staff or translation services such as a language line should be used. Parents have a right to these services even if their child is not an **English Learner (EL)**. Schools should have a process for determining what the language needs are for both students and parents. This can be done during registration where parents indicate what language is spoken most often at home.

PARENT'S RIGHTS & RESPONSIBILITIES

Answer truthfully when asked which language you prefer for communication. This information should not be used to discriminate against you or your child. When scheduling meetings with the school, confirm that an interpreter will be provided for you for that date and time. If there are issues with the provided materials or interpreters used by the school, bring up these concerns right away with the school administration.

TERMINOLOGY:

Limited English Proficient or LEP: someone who does not speak English as their primary language and who has limited ability to read, speak, write, or understand English.

English Learner or EL: a student who is in the process of acquiring English proficiency and has a first language other than English or in addition to English.

CITATIONS:

(1) Iowa Code §216.9

(2) <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/dcl-factsheet-lep-parents-201501.pdf>

COMMUNICATION WITH SCHOOLS

It is important for parents and schools to be in communication with each other regularly. Having a strong relationship with your child's teacher or school administrators can help to improve student engagement.

SCHOOL'S RESPONSIBILITIES:

Schools should be telling parents about events happening at schools and about the progress of their child regularly. Schools may host events where parents can come to learn more about the school and give parents an opportunity to meet with educators in person. Schools may also send home report cards, notices, and opportunities to volunteer. Some notices may require your signature or approval such as field trip notices, program participation, or something related to your child's grades.

PARENT'S RIGHTS & RESPONSIBILITY:

Make sure to keep all contact information recent in school files. Always let the schools know what your preferred method of communication such as email, phone calls, texts, or physical mail.

If a document is sent home that requires your signature, make sure to carefully read over all information provided. If you do not understand what you are being asked to sign, you may contact the school and ask for an explanation.

EMERGENCY CONTACTS:

Schools will ask you to provide them with an emergency contact for situations where they are unable to reach you. For example, you may be at work and your child gets sick and needs to be taken home. They would call your child's emergency contact and have them come pick the child up from school. Your emergency contact should be someone trustworthy and reliable. They do not have to be family but you will be asked what their relationship is to the child. They should be available to help your child if the need arises. Provide that emergency contact with a short list of your child's medical history such as any medication they take, allergies, or current illnesses. You may include more than one person as an emergency contact.

USING TECHNOLOGY TO COMMUNICATION WITH THE SCHOOL:

Schools often rely on technology to communicate with families.

For email, it is important to remember your **username** and **password** and check it regularly, so you do not miss out on communications from the school. You can also use this email to communicate directly with teachers or staff at the school. If you do not have regular access to a computer, email may not be the best choice for communication.



For phone calls and/or texts, make sure to save the school's number as a contact so you know it is them when they call and to make it easier for you to call them.



For physical mail, make sure regularly check if anything has been sent to you. This method will take the longest and is not recommended for quick communication but works for weekly or monthly announcements from the schools or student's grades.



TERMINOLOGY:

Password: a word or phrase that allows access to a computer system or service. it is recommended that you keep all of your passwords secret so others cannot access your accounts.

Username: an identification used to access to a computer, network, or online service.

FERPA

Stands for the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act

THE LAW

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) is a federal law that protects the privacy of student **education records**. These rights apply to the parents for their students until the student turns 18 when they have control of their own records (1).

SCHOOL'S RESPONSIBILITIES:

An annual notice must be sent out informing you of your rights regarding FERPA. Schools must obtain written consent before disclosing student information. There are cases where schools may disclose information without written permission needed under the following conditions:

- If there are school officials with legitimate educational interests
- Other schools to which a student is transferring
- Specified officials for audit or evaluation purposes
- Proper parties in connection with financial aid to a student
- Organizations conducting certain studies for or on behalf of the school
- Accrediting organizations
- To comply with a judicial order or lawfully issued subpoena
- Proper officials in cases of health and safety emergencies
- State and local authorities, within a juvenile justice system, pursuant to specific State law.

In these cases, you still have a right to request a copy of the records that were shared and ask questions of school officials as to why the information had been shared.

FERPA General Guidance for Parents (Spanish):

<https://studentprivacy.ed.gov/resources/ferpa-general-guidance-parents-en-español>

PARENT'S RIGHTS & RESPONSIBILITIES:

You have the right to inspect and review your child's records maintained by the school, request corrections or additions to the records, and the ability to give the school permission to release information from the students records if your child is under the age of 18. You also have the right to ask for explanations of the student's education records such as why a student was disciplined a certain way or for points of comparison for a students grade.

TERMINOLOGY:

Education Record: include but are not limited to grades, transcripts, class lists, student schedules, health records, and student discipline files.

CITATIONS:

(1) <https://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/ferpa/index.html>

RIGHTS OF UNDOCUMENTED STUDENTS AND FAMILIES

THE LAW

The decision for U.S. Supreme Court Case *Plyler v. Doe* (1982) states that **undocumented children** have the same constitutional right to attend public schools as citizen children.

SCHOOL'S RESPONSIBILITIES:

Schools may not:

- Deny admission to a student during initial enrollment or at any other time on the basis of undocumented status.
- Treat a student differently to determine residency.
- Engage in any practice to delay the right of access to school.
- Require students or parents to disclose or document their immigration status.
- Make inquiries of students or parents that may expose their undocumented status.
- Require social security numbers from students or parents for registration purposes. Schools may require proof of residency using bills or other mail. (1)

School personnel have *no legal obligation* to enforce U.S. immigration laws. If a student or parent chooses to disclose their status to school staff, no record should be kept of that information nor should that information be shared with others without the consent of the parents or student. If any note were to be made in a student's educational record, that information is protected by **FERPA**.

PARENT'S RIGHTS & RESPONSIBILITIES:

You may enroll your child within the district in which you live. To provide proof of residency you need only provide a piece of official mail such as a water bill or rent statement to the school. To provide proof of your child's age you may use a foreign birth certificate or medical records. The school should not keep a copy of this document or keep the original, they may only examine it.

TERMINOLOGY:

undocumented children: children under the age of 18 who do not have a permanent legal status within the United States

FERPA: Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act

FAMILY PREPAREDNESS PLAN

It is recommended that families who are undocumented or of mixed status create a Family Preparedness plan. This is a plan that is to be executed in the case of detention of a primary caretaker by ICE.

Steps to take:

- *Taking care of your children.* Parents should make plans with a trusted friend, preferably a citizen but they can also be legal permanent residents, to help take care of any children that may be left behind in the case of a raid. In these cases, you may also wish to speak to a trusted teacher or school official who can ensure that your child will still have access to school resources during this time. They can also help to ensure that your child makes it to school everyday and is only picked up by authorized adults.
- *Consider a power of attorney.* A power of attorney is a written document that they can sign to grant another person the authority to act on your behalf in specified ways. For example, a power of attorney may be used to designate another person to handle your finances, make business decisions, or use your money to pay your rent or mortgage. It is always recommended that families consult with an immigration or family law attorney when creating this plan.
- *Keep copies of important documents.* Gather all important documents and create copies. Keep them secure or place them in the care of trusted friends. The adult that is designated as the caregiver of your child should also receive copies of important documents related to your child. This includes information about your child's school, medical history, and contact information.
- *Talk with your children.* Let them know what to expect if you are not the one who picks them up from school. Let them know they will be safe with their caregiver. Let them know of other trusted adults they can go to in case of questions or emergencies.
- *Communicate with schools.* Ensure your child's school has updated emergency contact information for your chosen caregiver. Let the schools know that this person is authorized to pick up your child in the case of a detention. (2)

Plan de Preparación Familiar:

https://www.ilrc.org/sites/default/files/resources/plan_de_preparacion_familiar.v3.pdf

CITATIONS:

(1) Plyler v. Doe, 457 U.S. 202

(2)https://www.ilrc.org/sites/default/files/resources/family_preparedness_plan_v3-20170323.pdf

STUDENT CIVIL RIGHTS

THE LAW

Within the United States Constitution there is a Bill of Rights. The rights that are most applicable to students are freedom of speech and religion and freedom from unreasonable search and seizure

SCHOOL'S RESPONSIBILITIES:

Schools have an obligation to respect the civil rights of students. When schools implement new policies they must always make sure to not infringe on student's rights.

PARENT'S RIGHTS & RESPONSIBILITIES:

You can help your child by teaching them about the civil rights they have at school.

FREE SPEECH

While students maintain all of their **constitutional rights** when in school, they don't have the right to say and do anything they want. Schools can place reasonable limits on student actions and words. These rules can regulate the time, place and manner and sometimes content of speech. Private schools don't have to follow as many laws ensuring free speech.

Schools can regulate or control speech or actions if...

- It gets in the way of students learning in a proper environment. (That's why students aren't allowed to talk out of turn in most classrooms.)
- It violates the rights of others, such as slanderous or libelous speech or bullying or harassment.
- It encourages illegal behavior, for example T-shirts that promote drug use.
- It's vulgar or obscene. This is often judges on a case-by-case basis because what a school principal thinks is vulgar or obscene may not be what a student thinks is obscene. Just because it's about sex or homosexuality, for example, it's not necessarily obscene or vulgar.
- It's part of a school-sponsored publication, brochure, web site, or other type of media. However, in Iowa, students have a little more freedom than in other states because it is the publication advisor that makes the decision to keep or remove the publication and not a principle.
- It's conveying an "official" religious message or an official anti-religious message in the name of or on behalf of the school. (1)

FREEDOM OF RELIGION

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 protects students of any religion or no religion from discrimination, including harassment, based on a student's actual or perceived shared ancestry or ethnic characteristics, or citizenship or residency in a country with a dominant religion or distinct religious identity.

Students have a right to personal prayer that is not substantially disruptive to school activities. They also have a right to wear religiously mandated clothing and observe dietary rules. (2)

FREEDOM FROM UNREASONABLE SEARCH AND SEIZURE

In schools, students have an expectation of privacy in schools but this is dependent on who is doing the search and what item is being searched. Schools should have policies on what is considered school property and what is not. For example, a locker is considered school property so they can search it, usually only giving the students a notice. Schools may only search the personal property of the student if there are **reasonable grounds**. They must have other evidence to point to the student being in possession of something that is against school rules or is breaking the law. When the search is being conducted it must also be reasonable, for example strip searches are not allowed. Police have higher standards when it comes to searches. They must have **probable cause** or a search warrant from a court. If they do not have this a student may refuse the search. (3)

TERMINOLOGY:

United States Constitution: a document that establishes the laws for the country

Constitutional rights: rights afforded to all individuals who reside within the United States regardless of immigration status or country of origin.

Reasonable grounds: the person searching must base their suspicions on facts and must believe that the search will produce evidence.

Probable cause: a reasonable person believes a crime was, is, or will be committed.

CITATIONS:

(1) <https://www.aclu-ia.org/sites/default/files/smlr-10-4-12-student-handbook.pdf>

(2) <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/religion.html>

(3) <https://kidslegal.org/school-searches-and-seizure>

LGBTQ STUDENT RIGHTS

All countries and cultures have a history of LGBTQ people. In the United States the LGBTQ community has fought for many decades to receive equal rights in the workplace, in schools, and in all parts of society. Many of the protections for LGBTQ students have come in recent years and are still being fought for. If your child identifies as **Lesbian**, **Gay**, **Bisexual**, or **Transgender** they are a part of the **LGBTQ** community.

THE LAW

The Iowa Civil Rights Act clearly delineates that protection from unfair practices and discriminatory acts in education includes **gender identity** and **sexual orientation** (1). Federal regulations have changed in the previous years and will likely continue to change.

SCHOOL'S RESPONSIBILITIES:

Schools must not:

- Exclude a student or parent from participation in, denial of the benefits of, or subjection to discrimination in any academic, extracurricular, research, occupational training, or other programs or activity;
- Deny a comparable opportunity in intramural and interscholastic athletic programs;
- Discriminate in employment and the conditions of employment; (2)

If the school is both private and religiously affiliated there is a chance they are exempt from following anti-LGBTQ discrimination rules.

PARENT'S RIGHTS & RESPONSIBILITIES:

If your child is transgender and wishes to be out at school you can help them. Speak with school officials to communicate your child's needs regarding name change, bathroom usage, and general participation in school activities.

If you are an LGBTQ parent you have the same rights as **heterosexual** and/or **cisgender** parents of children enrolled in schools.

RESOURCES FOR PARENTS

If your child has come to you and shared that they identify as LGBTQ, you may have some questions. The first thing you can do to show your support for your child is to educate yourself on the issues and terminology of the LGBTQ community.

Websites:

Somos Familia

<https://www.somosfiliabay.org/>

Familia es Familia

<https://www.familiaesfamilia.org/>

LEGAL NAMES VS CHOSEN NAMES

Someone's legal name is the name that was given to them at birth and is used in all legal documents. When a child, or anyone, comes out as transgender they may ask to be referred to by a different name they have chosen for themselves. They may not feel like their previous name matches their true gender identity. This is not a sign of disrespect to parents who named them.

There is a process one must go through to get their name legally changed for any reason. For children under the age of 18 they will need their parent's help. Someone does not need to legally change their name in order to be referred to as that name.

As with all students, school staff should use the name chosen by the student and family. With a transgender student, staff should also use the personal pronoun (e.g. he or she) chosen by the student and family. *The student is not required to have his or her name legally changed for the student to request use of a preferred name.* The student's chosen name should be used on class rosters, for class activities, and/or other similar activities. However, a student's legal name must be indicated on the student's official records. (3)

BATHROOMS

School districts should work with students and families on a case-by-case basis to help resolve issues that respect the privacy and dignity of all students. State and federal laws allow schools to provide separate restroom and locker room facilities on the basis of sex, but state and federal agencies have directed that local school districts must allow transgender students access to the facilities that are consistent with their gender identity. A school may not require any student, including a transgender student, to use facilities inconsistent with the student's gender identity, nor may the district require transgender students to use individual user facilities when other students are not required to do so. A school may, however, make individual-user options available to all students who voluntarily seek additional privacy or security. Remember, a student cannot be forced to use a bathroom or locker room designated by sex for which the individual does not identify. (3)

TERMINOLOGY

LGBTQ: stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer.

Lesbian: a woman that is sexually, physically or emotionally attracted to women.

Gay: a man that is sexually, physically or emotionally attracted to men.

Bisexual: a person that is sexually, physically or emotionally attracted to people regardless of their gender.

Heterosexual: a man or a woman that is sexually, physically or emotionally attracted to people of the opposite sex.

Transgender: people who do not identify as the sex they were assigned at birth (based on their genitalia).

TERMINOLOGY

Cisgender: people who do identify as the sex they were assigned at birth (based on their genitalia)

Queer: a general term used by people in LGBTQ communities to describe people who do not identify with any specific category or label with respect to their sexual orientation.

Sex:

Gender:

Gender Identity: the way each person identifies internally with regard to gender. This could or could not correspond with the sex they were assigned at birth.

Sexual Orientation: a lasting emotional, romantic, sexual, or affectionate attraction toward other people.

Coming Out (of the closet): A phrase used to indicate that someone has shared their sexual orientation and/or gender identity that has previously been hidden to others (4)

CITATIONS:

(1) Iowa Code § 216.9

(2) https://www.ia-sb.org/Main/Downloads/news/TransgenderStudents_July_2016.pdf

(3) <https://educateiowa.gov/resources/legal-resources/legal-lessons/equality-transgender-students>

(4) <http://www.somos.dreamhosters.com/newwp/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/Cómo-Hablar-Sobre-El-Género-y-La-Orientación-Sexual-1doc.pdf>

DISABILITY RIGHTS

THE LAW

There are several federal laws that relate to children with disabilities in schools. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act or IDEA is a federal public education law that entitles children with disabilities access to special education and related services. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability. Provides for accommodation and some modification to meet disability-related needs. (1)

SCHOOL'S RESPONSIBILITIES:

Schools have multiple responsibilities as mandated by the IDEA and Section 504. One such responsibility is providing students with a free appropriate public education (FAPE). All eligible students with disabilities are entitled to FAPE. An appropriate education is defined as education in regular classes with the general student population, education in regular classes with the use of related aids and services as needed, or special education and related services in separate classrooms for all or portions of the school day. (2) Under IDEA schools must create an Individualized Education Program (IEP) for each student with a disability receiving special education and related services.

PARENT'S RIGHTS & RESPONSIBILITIES:

Under IDEA parental rights are referred to as 'procedural safeguards'. You should receive a copy of the procedural safeguards for your child from the school once a year. You will also receive one upon the initial referral or at the request of an evaluation of your child or when you make a request to the school.

Parents have a right to inspect and review records which includes:

- The right to a response from the participating agency to reasonable requests for explanations and interpretations of the records;
- The right to request that the agency provide copies of the records containing the information if failure to provide copies would effectively prevent you from exercising the right to inspect and review the records;
- The right to have your representative inspect and review the records.

PARENT'S RIGHTS & RESPONSIBILITIES CONT.:

Consent means you:

- Have been fully informed in your native language of all information related to your child
- Understand and agree in writing to that action, and the consent describes that action and lists the records (if any) that will be released and to whom
- Understand that the consent is voluntary on your part and you may withdraw your consent at any time. Your withdrawal of consent does not undo an action that has occurred after you gave your consent and before you withdrew it.

Parental consent is needed for an initial evaluation of a child to determine eligibility under IDEA. Consent for an evaluation is not consent for the school to start providing special education services to your child. You have a right to participate in meetings related to the identification, evaluation, and educational placement of your child. Schools should be providing notices to parents about meetings that include the purpose, time, location, and people in attendance. You may participate via video conferencing or phone call if you are unable to attend in person. (3)

IEP

An IEP is a written legal document that describes the student's special education program. It must mention the services, activities, and supports the student will receive. Each student will also have an IEP team that is responsible for developing the IEP for them. The student's IEP must be developed with consideration to each student's capabilities, strengths, needs, and interests.

A student's IEP team should include the following (one person may serve several roles):

- The parent of the student
- When appropriate, the student
- At least one general education teacher of the student
- At least one special education teacher of the student
- When appropriate at least one special education provider of the student
- An LEA representative who
 - Is qualified to provide or supervise specialized instruction of children with disabilities
 - Is knowledgeable about the Iowa Core Curriculum
 - Is knowledgeable about the availability of resources of the public agency
- An individual who can interpret the instructional implications of evaluation results
- With the consent and discretion of the parent or agency, other individuals who have knowledge or expertise regarding the student
- If appropriate, outside agency representatives

IEP CONT."

As a member of your child's IEP you should:

- Provide critical information about your child's abilities, interests, preferences, and history
- Participate in the discussion about your child's need for special education services, activities, and supports.
- Help to decide:
 - How your child will be involved and progress in the general education environment
 - How your child will participate in state and district-wide assessments
 - What services, activities, and supports the district AEA will provide to your child
 - What setting those services, activities, and supports will be provided.

DEAF OR HARD OF HEARING STUDENTS:

For students with auditory disabilities the schools must also create a Communication Plan as a part of the student's IEP. Deaf and Hard of Hearing students are to have access to Educational Interpreters.

BLIND OR VISUALLY IMPAIRED STUDENTS:

Students who are blind or visually impaired receive a learning media assessment (LMA) to determine the media that is best suited for the student to use for reading and writing.

HOME OR HOSPITAL BOUND STUDENTS:

Students who are unable to participate in general and special education provided in schools will still receive special education instruction and support services in a home or hospital setting. These services are provided by the LEA but may contract out to the AEA or other qualified agency. The LEA is ultimately responsible for ensuring that the services are provided. IEP meetings must be held to determine how services will be delivered.

TERMINOLOGY:

Least Restrictive Environment (LRE): based on the presumption that the general education environment is the first choice for educating all individuals. Individuals with disabilities should be provided with the greatest interaction with other individuals without disabilities, an appropriate education, and the special assistance needed for success in the general education environment.

IDEA: Individuals with Disabilities Act is a law that makes appropriate public education free to eligible children with disabilities and ensures special education and related services to those children.

FAPE: Free and Appropriate Public Education is a right afforded to all students with disabilities. It is granted by IDEA and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act.

TERMINOLOGY:

LEA: Local Education Agency is another term for a local school district.

IEP: Individualized Education Plan is created for students who need special education by school officials and their parents.

Special Education: a broad term that describes the education of students who have intellectual, physical, behavioral or emotional disabilities. It involves specially designed instruction tailored to the unique needs of each child, and is provided at no cost to parents.

CITATION:

(1) <https://www.askresource.org/resources/comparison-of-section-504-and-idea>

(2) <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/edlite-FAPE504.html>

(3) <https://educateiowa.gov/pk-12/special-education/parent-information/procedural-safeguards-manual-parents-rights-children-0>

ENGLISH LANGUAGE (EL) STUDENTS

In Iowa, students who are in the process of acquiring English **proficiency** are given the status of EL, or English Learner. They may also use ELL which stands for English Language Learner. EL students are entitled to an equal opportunity to participate in all programs offered by a school such as career and technical education, athletic programs, arts, AP courses, clubs, and honors programs.

THE LAW

Under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Equal Educational Opportunity Act of 1974 (EEOA), all public schools must ensure that EL students can participate fully and equally in education programs. In Iowa Code both public and nonpublic schools need to provide special instructions to EL students. (1)

There have been several Court Cases through the years that address the education of EL Students. One such case was *Lau v. Nichols* (1974) which established the Lau Plan which requires schools to make a plan to address language instruction education needs. (2)

SCHOOL'S RESPONSIBILITIES:

Schools should have a process for determining what the language needs are for students. Appropriate language assistance services are to be provided to all students who require them. EL programs should be adequately supported and staffed. Only qualified EL teachers should be instructing students. Staff may assist teachers but should not be leading EL classes. All EL students should have the same access to all curricular and extracurricular programs in their school. EL students are not to be unnecessarily segregated in schools. (3)

If a student is both an EL student and is in need of Special Education, schools must provide both services.

PARENT'S RIGHTS & RESPONSIBILITIES:

Ask questions of the staff if you think your child has been misidentified. This could mean they are placed in an EL program when they do not need it or are misplaced into special education programs instead of an EL program. If you think your child is also in need of special education along with an EL program, ask to speak to the appropriate staff to ask about assessments. You have the right to opt out of EL programs or particular services for your child. You should make a decision only after being provided with full guidance from school staff in your preferred language. You also have the right to opt back into services if circumstances change. If you have multiple children you may choose different services for each child.

ELPA21:

ELPA21 is the English Language Proficiency Assessment for the 21st Century. It is used to assess the growth of English proficiency for EL students. It is an online test that evaluates students on reading, writing, listening and speaking. (4)

Accommodations are available for students with IEPs or 504 plans:

<https://elpa21.org/assessment-system/accessibility-and-accommodations/>

TERMINOLOGY:

Proficient: Iowa Code § 280.4(1) defines "fully English proficient" as a student who can read, understand, write, speak, ask questions, understand teachers and reading materials, test ideas, and challenge what is being asked in the classroom in English.

CITATION:

(1) <https://www.askresource.org/resources/comparison-of-section-504-and-idea>

(2) <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/edlite-FAPE504.html>

(3) <https://educateiowa.gov/pk-12/special-education/parent-information/procedural-safeguards-manual-parents-rights-children-0>

(4) <https://educateiowa.gov/english-language-proficiency-assessment-21st-century-elpa-21>

SCHOOL FEES

THE LAW

Under Iowa Administrative Code, schools are able to offer full or partial fee waivers. Full waiver of all fees are granted if the student or their family meet the financial eligibility requirement for free meals, the Family Investment Program (FIP), transportation aid, or if the student is in foster care. Partial fee waivers are available if the student or their family meet the financial eligibility requirement for reduced-meal prices. Temporary fee waivers can be granted if of a temporary financial difficulty within the student's immediate family.

SCHOOL'S RESPONSIBILITIES:

Schools are only allowed to charge fees for the following as authorized in Iowa Code:

- Textbooks
- School supplies
- Summer school programs
- Driver education programs
- Transportation fees for resident students who are not otherwise entitled to free transportation
- Eye protective devices
- Ear protective devices
- School meals
- Nonresident student tuition
- Technology (laptops, chromebooks, etc)

PARENT'S RIGHTS & RESPONSIBILITIES:

In public schools, students are often sent a list of supplies they will need for the year. This often includes notebooks, pencils, pens, folders, etc. Each grade often requires different supplies. Students are also assigned textbooks that they are responsible for and must use for the entire year. If textbooks are damaged there are often fees. Some schools also provide technology such as laptops to students that they can take home and use to complete homework or to study. Parents are only responsible for supplies that are going to be used by their students. They are not to buy supplies for use by the entire classroom.

MEALS

Students stay at school for lunch and can sometimes have breakfast at school too. Children are able to bring their own lunch from home. Schools will have rules on what they can and cannot bring. When packing a lunch for your child keep in mind that they may not have access to a way to reheat their food.

FREE/REDUCED LUNCH

Schools will publish new lunch and breakfast prices each year and parents should annually consider completing an Iowa eligibility application. Children whose families complete an Iowa eligibility application annually may qualify for free or reduced price meals as well as a waiver of fees. Eligibility is based on household income. Children who were approved for free or reduced meals during the past school year will continue to be eligible for free or reduced meals for the first 30 days of the new school year. If an application is not completed by the end of the first 30 days they will be required to pay for meals until another application is completed and approved. Therefore, it's recommended that a new application be completed at the beginning of each school year.

- To qualify for the fee waiver application must be signed indicating the information on the students' free or reduced status may be shared with the school office staff. An application may be completed at any time during the school year. If your household income declines you are encouraged to complete an application at that time. If a change is reported that will increase benefits that change will be made. An increase in income does not need to be reported until the following school year.

STUDENT MISCONDUCT & DISCIPLINE

Each school will have its own set of rules that students must follow. If they break those rules they can be punished by the school. The punishment should depend on the severity of the problem. However, there are limits to the things schools can do to students.

THE LAW

Under Iowa Code section 279.8 the local school board establishes the **rules of conduct** for its students. This includes conduct of students participating in extracurricular activities when they are not on school grounds.

The State Board of Education has adopted the following principles when reviewing good conduct **appeals**:

- A secondary student has no “right” to participate in interscholastic athletics or other extracurricular activities.
- Since there is no right to participate, the amount of due process owed to a student in such cases is minimal. Due process requires only two elements: 1) the student must be told what he is accused of; and 2) the student must be given an opportunity to tell their side of the story.
- In order for a student to be disciplined under a school’s good conduct policy there need only be “some evidence” that a student violated the policy. Id. Due process does not require courtroom evidence standards. “Some evidence” is less than preponderance of evidence and far from beyond a reasonable doubt (1)

Violations of student conduct policies can have a range of consequences but schools are still limited in some ways. Iowa Code Chapter 103 contains the Department of Education’s rules on seclusion and restraint as consequences to student misconduct. The chapter was amended and changes were effective November 12th, 2008. It included changes to rules regarding corporal punishment, restraint, and physical confinement and detention

SCHOOL’S RESPONSIBILITIES:

Under Chapter 103 in Iowa Code, all school employees must receive adequate, periodic, and documented training on:

- Positive behavior interventions and supports
- Disciplinary options to seclusion & restraint
- Crisis prevention, crisis intervention, crisis de-escalation techniques
- Student and staff debriefing
- Safe, effective use of restraint and confinement and detention

SCHOOL'S RESPONSIBILITIES CONT.:

Parents must also be notified of any disciplinary incident involving their child. If possible the notification should happen on the day of the incident. There must also be proper documentation of the incident that required the use of any physical confinement or restraint that should be provided to the parents.

Documentation of events must include:

- Actions of the student before, during, and after the incident
- Actions of employees before, during, and after the incident
- Alternatives to restraint or confinement attempt, if any
- Description of injuries to student, others, and/or property
- Description of future approaches to students' behavior

PHYSICAL CONFINEMENT, SECLUSION AND RESTRAINTS:

Only to be used in emergencies and as a preventative measure. It is not to be used for minor infractions and may only be used if other disciplinary techniques have been attempted. It is considered to be physical confinement when a student is placed in a room or other enclosure where their ability to leave is restricted.

The room where students are held must be of a reasonable size that are free from hazards. The age, size, and physical and mental condition of the student must be taken into consideration. The room must have sufficient light, adequate ventilation, and a temperature consistent with the rest of the building. The period of confinement must be reasonable and allow for breaks for bodily needs such as using the restroom. Administrator approval is needed for confinement that exceeds 60 minutes or a typical class period (whichever is shorter). There must be adequate and continuous adult supervision during confinement.

Use of a time-out desk within a classroom or a hallway, after school detention, and in-school suspension arrangements are *not* considered physical confinement.

Material restraints may not be used on students outside of medical uses. Improper use of safety, therapeutic, or medical devices also violates this rule.

REASONABLE FORCE

School employees may use reasonable and necessary force provided it is not designed or intended to cause pain. These are examples of when a school employee may use reasonable and necessary force:

- Stop an act that threatens harm to the student or others
- Obtain a weapon or dangerous object from a student
- Self-defense
- Protection of property
- Remove a disruptive student from school property or school activities

REASONABLE FORCE CONT

The following must be taken into account when determining the reasonableness of an action:

- The size and physical, mental, and psychological condition of the student;
- The nature of the student's behavior or misconduct provoking the use of physical force;
- The tools used in applying the physical force such as handcuffs
- The extent and nature of resulting injury to the student, if any;
- The motivation of the school employee using physical force.

Sometimes things will happen even when an employee is acting reasonably. If the student is injured it does not automatically make the force unreasonable. However, things like prone restraint, being held face down, or any kind of hold that restricts a student's airways is not a reasonable use of force.

CORPORAL PUNISHMENT:

State law forbids school employees from using corporal punishment against any student. School employees may use "reasonable and necessary force, not designed or intended to cause pain" to do certain things, such as preventing harm to the student themselves, other persons present or property.

Corporal punishment does not include:

- Verbal chastisement directed toward a student;
- Reasonable requests or requirements of a student engaged in activities associated with physical education class or extracurricular athletics;
- Actions consistent with and included in an individualized education program however, under no circumstances shall an individualized education program violate the provisions of this chapter;
- Reasonable periods of detention, not in excess of school hours, or brief periods of before and after-school detention, in a seat, classroom or other part of a school facility, unless the detention is accomplished by the use of material restraints applied to the person.
- Actions by an employee subject to these rules toward a person who is not a student of the school or receiving the services of an area education agency employing or utilizing the services of the employee.

PARENT'S RIGHTS & RESPONSIBILITIES:

You may, on behalf of your child, appeal a decision made by a local school board such as a suspension or other disciplinary action. The appeal is to be made to the State Board of Education. You must file your claim within 30 days of the decision. The entire case could take months to resolve if it is taken up by the State Board. (2)

DETENTION:

Detention is at after school in a designated room being supervised by an assigned teacher or staff member. Detention is given for behavioral issues or to students who repeatedly break rules.

The following are some common reasons for detention:

- Late to school or class
- Use of electronic devices when prohibited
- Unprepared for class
- Cut Detention
- Use of profanity
- Defiance of authority
- Eating out of designated areas
- Chewing gum when prohibited
- Disturbed class
- P.E. non-dress
- Disrespectful/rude behavior
- Dress code violation
- Progress Report/signature required forms not in, etc.

There are other rules students must follow once in detention. Failure to comply may result in another detention or a loss of activity privileges. All school rules apply in detention. Students can sometimes choose the date of their after-school detention and have the responsibility of telling their parents or legal guardians. Usually lasts between 30 minutes - 1 hour after school. Sometimes schools can assign in school lunch detention

IN SCHOOL SUSPENSION

When a student violates a school's **code of conduct**, that student may be placed in a designated location (the in-school suspension room) and is removed from their normal school schedule and activities for a specified period of time. The student will remain under the direct supervision of school personnel.

OUT-OF-SCHOOL SUSPENSION:

Defined as a temporary, complete exclusion from school and activities including being on school property. A typical out-of-school suspension lasts a few days, though it can range from a few hours to weeks long. This penalty is one of the most severe a school district can enforce and stops short only of being completely kicked out.

EXPULSION

The Board of Directors for the District may, by a majority vote, expel a student from school for a violation of the regulations or rules established by the Board, or when the presence of the student is detrimental to the best interest of the school. When a student is expelled they are not eligible to receive educational services from the District.

TERMINOLOGY:

Timeout: an imposed temporary suspension of activities, especially the separation of a misbehaving child from one or more playmates as a disciplinary measure.

Corporal punishment: is defined to mean the intentional physical punishment of a student. It includes the use of unreasonable or unnecessary physical force, or physical contact made with the intent to harm or cause pain.

Physical confinement and detention: means the confinement of a student in a time-out room or some other enclosure, whether within or outside the classroom, from which the student's egress is restricted.

Physical Restraint: the application of physical force by 1 or more individuals that reduces or restricts another individual's ability to move their arms, legs, or head freely.

Rules/Code of Conduct: Created by a local school board, these are rules that affect how students are to conduct themselves when at school

CITATION:

(1) <https://www.askresource.org/resources/comparison-of-section-504-and-idea>

(2) <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/edlite-FAPE504.html>

(3) <https://educateiowa.gov/pk-12/special-education/parent-information/procedural-safeguards-manual-parents-rights-children-0>

(4) <https://educateiowa.gov/english-language-proficiency-assessment-21st-century-elpa-21>

ATTENDANCE AND TRUANCY

When students are not in class they are missing out on learning.

THE LAW

In Iowa there is a Compulsory Education law that requires children between the ages of 6 and 16 to be registered and attend school by September 15th of each year.

There are only a few exceptions to this rule:

- Children who are “members of a religious group who have completed a basic level of education and are religiously exempted from the remaining compulsory school years.”
- Children who “have physical or mental conditions that don’t permit school attendance”
- Court ordered executions (1)

SCHOOL'S RESPONSIBILITY

When establishing attendance policies, a school should take into consideration what is best for students. All expectations set for students must be reasonable. If regular absences or **chronic absenteeism** is due to a student's limited academic success, bullying, or a diagnosed or undiagnosed disability, schools must provide reasonable educational alternatives or supports for the students.

Students should not be punished for absences that occur out of their control.

Attendance policies are required to be reviewed every five years. (2)

PARENT'S RIGHTS & RESPONSIBILITIES:

Truancy is the intentional absence from school. In Iowa a student is considered truant if they have eight or more unexcused absences in a 45-day period though certain districts or schools may have different expectations or policies. Parents can be cited for these absences and potentially be referred to a county attorney for mediation or prosecution. Before a parent is prosecuted the school must reach out and try to work with the parents to solve the issue. Only if this process doesn't work will the parents be referred to an attorney.

If the mediation is not successful the parents may face the following penalties:

- First Offence: At most, 10 days in jail and a \$100 fine or 40 hours of community service
- Second Offence: Not more than 20 days in jail and a \$500 fine
- Third or Subsequent Offence: Up to 30 days in jail and \$1,000 fine.

If unable to pay the fine, community service may be ordered instead. Students may also be referred to juvenile detention depending on the circumstance.

EXCUSED ABSENCES

There are times when a child must miss school. If your child is sick it is recommended that they stay home so they do not spread the illness to other students. Schools usually require a note from a doctor to count the absence as excused. If your child becomes ill while at school, the nurse will contact the parents to come and get the child.

DROPOUT PREVENTION

Dropout prevention interventions are school- and community-based initiatives that aim to keep students in school and encourage them to complete their high school education. Interventions and services, such as counseling, monitoring, school restructuring, curriculum redesign, and community services are provided to remove barriers so students may be successful academically, personally and in a career or vocation.

TERMINOLOGY:

At-Risk Students: students who need more support and who are not meeting or not expected to meet the goals of the educational program (academic, personal/social, career/vocational). Includes but is not limited to students in the following groups: homeless children and youth, dropouts, returning dropouts, and potential dropouts.

Dropout: A school-age student in grades seven through twelve and who does not attend school or withdraws from school for a reason other than death or transfer to another approved school or has been expelled with no opportunity to return

Returning Dropouts: means students in grades seven through twelve who withdrew from school for a reason other than transfer to another school or school district and who are later enrolled in a public school in the district.

Potential dropouts: Students who show poor school adjustment as shown by two or more of the following:

- a. High rate of absenteeism, truancy, or frequent tardiness.
- b. Limited or no extracurricular participation or lack of identification with school, including but not limited to, expressed feelings of not belonging.
- c. Poor grades, including but not limited to, failing in one or more school subjects or grade levels.
- d. Low achievement scores in reading or mathematics which show achievement at two years or more below grade level.
- e. Children in grades kindergarten through three who meet the definition of at-risk children adopted by the department of education (3)

CITATIONS:

- (1) Iowa Code Chapter 299
- (2) <https://educateiowa.gov/resources/legal-resources/legal-lessons/attendance-policies-key-points-remember-september-2014>
- (3) <https://educateiowa.gov/dropout-prevention>

ACADEMIC YEAR

An academic year is different from a calendar year. A school year in Iowa begins in August and ends in May. If classes are missed due to weather or other cancelations, they must be made up. Read more about school cancelations on page x. The school week begins Monday and ends Friday. The exact start and end time will depend on the school but will often be for 8 hours.

BREAKS AND HOLIDAYS

There are four primary breaks that occur during the school year where classes are not in session for over 3 days. These are Thanksgiving, Winter Break, Spring Break, and Summer Break. The exact dates will vary between schools. The longest of the breaks is Summer break which is generally about three months long.

CLOSURES AND DELAYS

Schools may decide to start late, end early, or cancel classes altogether for many reasons. In Iowa, most often these occur due to weather or extreme temperatures. Local news stations will share which schools will be open or closed due to weather across the state. It's best to check this the night before classes and the morning of school incase weather changes drastically. Other reasons schools may be closed can be healthy related such as an outbreak of influenza or other illness.

SNOW MAKE-UP DAYS

In the case of missed school days due to snow students will be expected to attend extra school days at the end of the year. If 3 days total were missed due to snow, three days will be added onto the end of the year. All of the same rules and responsibilities for parents and the school apply during these days. If students miss these make up days they will be considered absent.

CLOTHING

Students in public schools in Iowa do not wear school uniforms. Instead, each school district will have their own dress code that a child must follow. Certain private schools will have uniforms that students must wear.

THE LAW

Iowa Code states that schools may only tell students what they cannot wear and can never tell them what they must wear. Local school boards determine what students cannot wear. Boards may ban 'gang-related apparel' if they think the clothing has a significant impact on the student's safety or if it draws attention away from their education.

SCHOOL'S RESPONSIBILITY

Schools must apply all dress codes equally across all genders. Schools can ban clothing that has obscene, vulgar, or offensive language or promotes illegal activities.

Once a child starts taking a physical education class they will be asked to bring a second set of exercise clothing and shoes.

PARENT'S RIGHTS & RESPONSIBILITIES:

Make sure your child is dressed appropriately for school everyday. This also means making sure they are protected against the cold during the fall and winter months. Many schools require that students have coats, snow boots, hats, gloves, and a scarf during the winter, especially if the child will be going outside.

CITATIONS:

(1) Iowa Code 279.58

(2)

HARASSMENT & BULLYING

Bullying is similar to harassment and is defined by unwanted, aggressive behavior among school aged children that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. The behavior is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time.

THE LAW

Iowa Code prohibits an educational institution from discriminating on the basis of race, creed, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, religion, or disability in any academic, extracurricular, research, occupational training, or other program or activity. Harassment is considered to be a form of discrimination. This law applies to any preschool, elementary or secondary school, community college, area education agency, or postsecondary college or university. (1)

Bullying is defined as any electronic, written, verbal, or physical act or conduct toward a student which is based on any actual or perceived trait or characteristic of the student and which creates an objectively hostile school environment that meets one or more of the following conditions:
Places the student in reasonable fear of harm to the student's person or property.

Has a substantially detrimental effect on the student's physical or mental health.

Has the effect of substantially interfering with a student's academic performance.

Has the effect of substantially interfering with the student's ability to participate in or benefit from the services, activities, or privileges provided by a school (2)

SCHOOL'S RESPONSIBILITY

A school must take steps to prevent harassment before it occurs. An institution needs to raise the issue and confront harassment before it becomes a problem. Schools may do this by providing training to administrators, staff, and students so that they understand and recognize prohibited behavior and how to report it.

Under Title IX, schools should have a policy to stop sexual harassment and must create a **grievance procedure** that is fair and suitable for dealing with sexual harassment complaints. Once a harassment complaint has been filed, the school administration needs to take remedial action. When a harassment complaint is filed the school should begin a prompt and confidential investigation. Select personnel should be designated and trained to investigate complaints. If the investigation shows that the harassment did happen, the school should take prompt disciplinary action against the harasser. Schools should act similarly in cases of bullying.

PARENT'S RIGHTS & RESPONSIBILITIES:

If your child is a victim of harassment in school there are actions you can take. If possible, help your child tell the harasser in person or in writing that the behavior is not welcome. Be specific about actions or words that make them uncomfortable. Keep a written record of the incidents of harassment. Make a note of witnesses who might have seen the incident.

If the harassment does not stop, report it to school administration. If the school does not take prompt action to stop and resolve the complaint, file a complaint with an external agency such as the district superintendent or the Iowa Department of Education. You may also contact the Iowa Civil Rights Commission. The Commission provides educational materials on civil rights and discrimination.

DEFINING HARASSMENT & BULLYING

Types of Bullying and Examples

- Verbal: teasing, name-calling, inappropriate sexual comments, taunting, threatening to cause harm
- Social: leaving someone out on purpose, telling other children not to be friends with someone, spreading rumors about someone, embarrassing someone in public
- Physical: hitting, kicking, punching, spitting, tripping, pushing, taking or breaking someone's things, making mean or rude hand gestures.

TIPS ON TEACHING KIDS ABOUT BULLYING:

- Teach kids to solve problems without using violence and praise them when they do.
- Give children positive feedback when they behave well to help their build self-esteem. Help give them the self-confidence to stand up for what they believe in.
- Ask your children about their day and listen to them talk about school, social events, their classmates, and any problems they have.
- Take bullying seriously. Many kids are embarrassed to say they have been bullied. You may only have one chance to step in and help. If you see any bullying, stop it right away, even if your child is the one doing the bullying.
- Encourage your child to help others who need it.
- Don't bully your children or bully others in front of them. Many times kids who are bullied at home react by bullying other kids. If your children see you hit, ridicule, or gossip about someone else, they are also more likely to do so themselves.
- Support bully prevention programs in your child's school. If your school doesn't have one, consider starting one with other parents, teachers, and concerned adults.

CYBERBULLYING

Cyberbullying is the same as bullying but occurs over digital devices like cell phones and laptops and through text, apps, or social media.

Cyberbullying includes sending, posting, or sharing negative, harmful, false, or mean content about someone else. It can include sharing personal or private information about someone else causing embarrassment or humiliation. Some cyberbullying crosses the line into unlawful or criminal behavior. For example, sexting or sharing naked photos of themselves or others can lead to legal trouble if the the person sending or receiving the image is underage or if the person in the photo is underage.

Cyberbullying has unique concerns in that it can be:

- Persistent – Digital devices offer an ability to immediately and continuously communicate 24 hours a day, so it can be difficult for children experiencing cyberbullying to find relief.
- Permanent – Most information communicated electronically is permanent and public, if not reported and removed. A negative online reputation, including for those who bully, can impact college admissions, employment, and other areas of life.
- Hard to Notice – Because teachers and parents may not overhear or see cyberbullying taking place, it is harder to recognize. (3)

TIPS FOR PARENTS ON CYBERBULLYING

- Talk to your child about appropriate digital behavior and content
- Set clear expectations about digital behavior and online reputation.
- Educate about the harmful effects of cyberbullying, posting hateful speech or comments, sexting, and sharing naked photos of themselves or others (including potential legal issues).
- Be clear about what content can be viewed or shared.
- Identify which apps are appropriate for your child's use and which are not.
- Establish rules about the amount of time that a child can spend online or on their devices.
- Model positive, respectful digital behavior on your own devices and accounts. (4)

EMPLOYEE INTERACTIONS WITH STUDENTS

District employees and other non-District employees or volunteers providing services to the District are expected to keep professional boundaries with students and their families. Behaviors that may be misconstrued include but are not limited to:

- Singling out students for favors
- Spending a majority of time with one student or a single group of students unless specifically part of one's work assignment
- Overly personal communications
- Being alone with a student outside of public view
- Giving gifts or money to students
- Behaviors that are inappropriate unless specifically part of an education,
- Touching students often
- Inappropriate physical contact
- Sharing personal situations with students
- Inviting current school district students to one's home for social purposes
- Commenting on students' bodies in an overtly sexual manner
- Making sexist comments
- Being alone in a locked room with a student unless it's an emergency situation
- Talking about student sexuality
- Meeting students during out-of-school hours and away from school grounds
- Teasing that is flirtatious or has the potential to demean a student
- Sending notes, letters, e-mails or texts to students not about school work, unless an administrator or parents, is copied on the communication
- Transporting student(s) unless authorized by an administrator

If you have concerns about any interactions between a student and employee of the school, contact the Principle or report it to the districts Title IX coordinator.

Anyone who reports on the actions of an employee of a school is protected from retaliation.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT:

Sexual harassment refers to repetitive unwanted sexual advances, requests for sexual acts or favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature. Schools must intervene with actions that affect a child's grades or make a child too afraid to enter certain places in the school under Title IX. Sexual harassment can occur between students or by a teacher to a student.

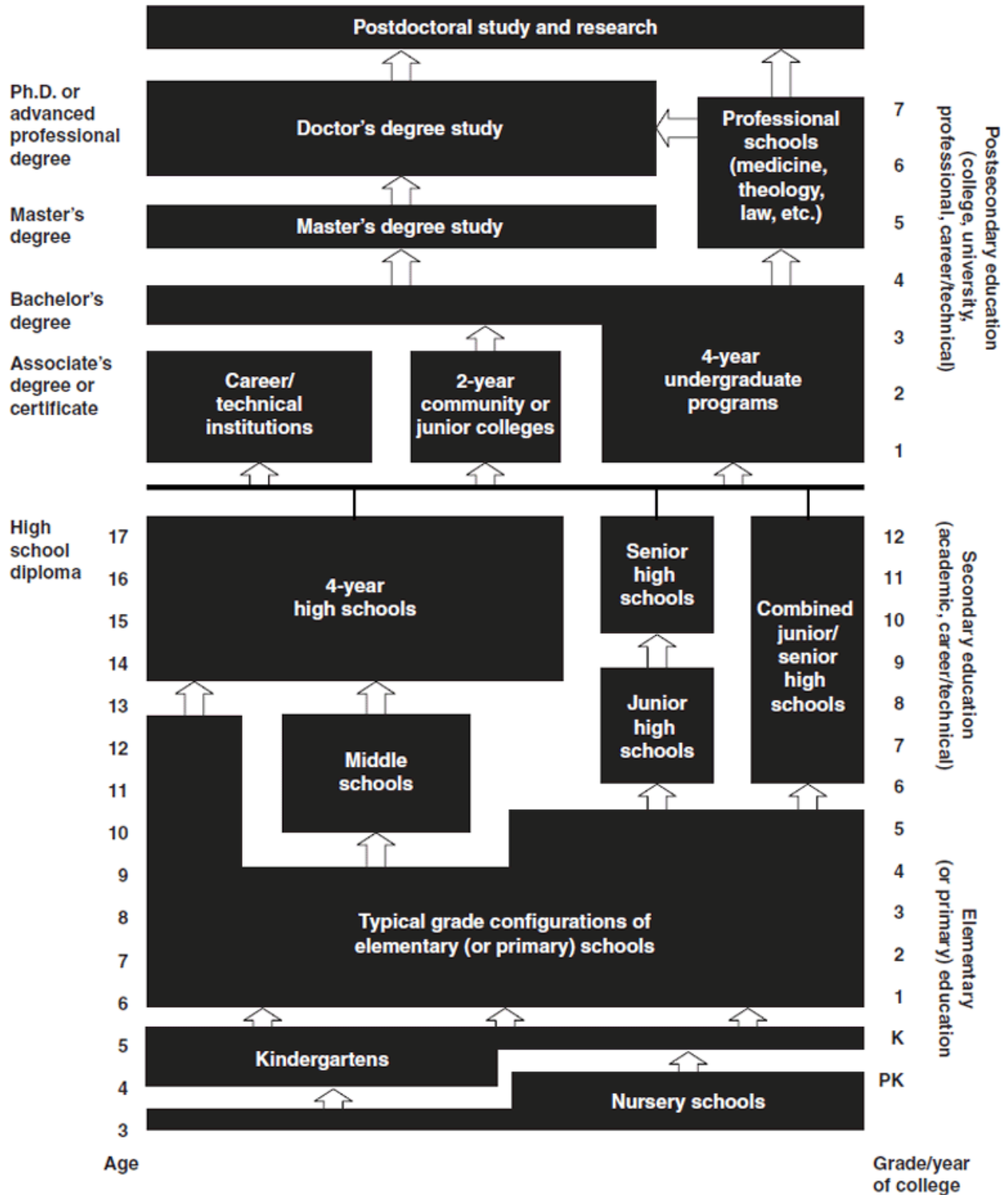
TERMINOLOGY

Grievance procedure: internal school procedures that address violations of a school's policy against discrimination, including sexual harassment.

CITATIONS:

- (1) Iowa Code Section 216.9
- (2) Iowa Code Section 280.28
- (3) <https://www.stopbullying.gov/cyberbullying/what-is-it/index.html>
- (4) <https://www.stopbullying.gov/cyberbullying/establishing-rules/index.html>

EDUCATION STRUCTURE



Ages	Grade
Elementary School	
5-6	Kindergarten
6-7	First (1st) Grade
7-8	Second (2nd) Grade
8-9	Third (3rd) Grade
9-10	Fourth (4th) Grade
10-11	Fifth (5th) Grade
Middle School	
11-12	Sixth (6th) Grade
12-13	Seventh (7th) Grade
13-14	Eighth (8th) Grade

High School		
Age	Grade	Grade Name
14-15	Nineth (9th) Grade	Freshman Year
15-16	Tenth (10th) Grade	Sophomore Year
16-17	Eleventh (11th) Grade	Junior Year
17-18	Twelfth (12th) Grade	Senior Year

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

desc

THE LAW

Legislation passed in 2007 in Iowa started the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program for Four-Year-Old Children (SWVPP). It expanded voluntary access to preschool programming. While not legally required, early childhood education can help to better prepare a child for future education.

SCHOOL'S RESPONSIBILITIES

Schools who operate SWVPP are required to meet program standards outlined in Iowa Code chapter 16. This includes meeting requirements for personnel, class sizes, curriculum, parent involvement, and others.

PARENT'S RESPONSIBILITIES

Parents must decide when they wish to enroll their child in early childhood education programs. You can choose to enroll them in Early Head Start, Head Start, or Preschool or all three.

HEADSTART/EARLY HEADS

Headstart is a child development program for low-income families, those who receive Supplemental Security Income benefits, or for families who have children with disabilities. If your child has a disability and is in the 130th percentile of poverty or higher they may still qualify. Head Start serves children ages 3 and 4 and Early Head Start serves children ages 0-3 and pregnant individuals. Many Early Head Start programs also encourage parents to take part in Family Development where staff will work one-on-one with families to help them succeed.

EDUCATION ALTERNATIVES

There are more options to choose from than just public school for your child's education. If the current school your child attends is not meeting your needs, you can consider other options.

PRIVATE SCHOOL

There are opportunities for parents to enroll their children in private schools for their K-12 Education. While public schools are run by the state government, private schools are not. Often students must pay tuition to attend and may also receive scholarships. Private schools may also be affiliated with a church or religion and may receive religious instruction alongside their general education.

	Public Schools	Private Schools
Funding and Control	Controlled by the government and funded by taxes, free to all students.	Funded by students' tuition and administered by a private body
Curriculum	is set at the national level	Shares the same curriculum as government schools but differs in the method of delivery
Teachers	Recruits teachers who meet state-mandated requirements	Independent criteria for recruiting teachers
Admission	obliged to take in students who belong to their respective geographical zone	The school has the authority to decide whether a student meets the requirements for admission or not.

PRIVATE INSTRUCTION/HOMESCHOOLING:

An alternative to traditional public and nonpublic schools is to educate a child at home.

The State allows for several types of homeschooling:

- Full-time homeschool with the support of a certified teacher. Home instruction is supervised by a teacher hired by the family or provided by a district's Home School Assistance program (HSAP)
- Full-time homeschool without the support of a certified teacher. The family provides the total educational program with no interaction with a public school or certified teacher
- Part-time homeschool with part-time enrollment in a school district. The student completes some instruction at home, and takes part in a public school for some instruction or extra-curricular activities.
- Attendance at a non-accredited school. A student attends a school that does not meet accreditation standards.

All of these options meet compulsory attendance and truancy laws. Driver's education will be offered or made available by the district, dual enrollment is not required.

ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL

Alternative school is an environment apart from the regular educational program and that includes policies and rules, staff, and resources designed to accommodate student needs and to provide a comprehensive education consistent with the student learning goals and content standards created by the school district or by the school districts participating in a consortium. Students attend by choice.

There may be several reasons why a child would be recommended or choose to attend an alternative school. It's a misunderstanding that only students who are at-risk or those that have behavioral issues attend alternative school.

OPEN ENROLLMENT

The process by which parents can enroll their child into a school district other than the one they live in. There is no direct cost associated with open enrollment.

SCHOOL'S RESPONSIBILITIES:

Districts must notify parents of open enrollment deadlines, transportation assistance, and possible loss of athletic eligibility for open enrollment of students by September 30 of each school year. Notification shall also be provided to any parent/guardian who transfers into the district during the school year.

Districts may limit the number of students open enrolling into the district.

PARENT'S RIGHTS & RESPONSIBILITIES:

- Each year there are two deadlines, one for students entering grades 1-12 and another for students entering kindergarten. Applications, and transportation assistance documents are available on the Iowa Department of Education website. The following are accepted reasons for a timeline waiver is the change occurred or began after March 1st:
- Change in family district of residence
- Change in the marital status of the student's parents resulting in a change in resident district
- Placement of the child in foster care resulting in change of residence
- Adoption
- Participating in a foreign exchange program
- Participation in a substance abuse or mental health treatment program resulting in a change of residence
- Serious health need
- Pervasive harassment
- Pervasive harassment is defined as specific electronic, written, verbal, or physical acts of conduct toward a student which creates an objectively hostile school environment.
 - This includes:
 - placing the student in reasonable fear of harm to themselves or their property
 - Serious negative effects to the student's physical or mental health
 - Serious interference with a student's academic performance
 - Serious interference with the student's ability to take part in or benefit from services, activities, or privileges provided by a school

Parents are responsible for the transportation of the student without reimbursement, except for those that meet the eligibility requirements below:

Household Size	Yearly	Monthly	Twice Per Month	Every Two Weeks	Weekly
1	21,108	1,760	880	813	407
2	28,578	2,382	1,191	1,100	550
3	36,048	3,004	1,503	1,387	696
4	43,518	3,627	1,814	1,674	837
5	50,987	4,250	2,126	1,962	982
6	58,457	4,872	2,436	2,249	1,125
7	65,927	5,495	2,748	2,536	1,269
8	73,397	6,117	3,059	2,824	1,412
Additional family member	7,470	623	312	287	144

REGISTRATION

SCHOOL'S RESPONSIBILITIES:

Schools will announce when their registration periods are open. Typically the parents must go to the school itself to fill out paperwork and provide all the needed information though schools may provide online registration.

All schools will require that you have proof of residency within the school district to be eligible for enrollment. Rules will vary but most often documents such as utility bills, mortgage, lease, or rent agreements or payment receipts, or a letter from the parent's employer.

Parents may also be required to prove the age of the child for purposes of placing the child in the right grade. A United States or foreign birth certificate can be used but is not required and schools must allow for alternative documents to be used. The use of a foreign birth certificate cannot prevent the enrollment of a child into a school and doing such would be illegal. Neither should the school use any information provided by parents to inquire into the immigration status of the child or family. The school should never make copies or keep any documents that you provide to prove residency or age of our child. Make sure that all documents you provide to the school are given back to you in their original condition.

UNDOCUMENTED STUDENT AND FAMILY RIGHTS:

Guidelines from the U.S. Department of Education state that immigration or citizenship status is not relevant to proving residency in a school district and that inquiring about it is unnecessary. This applies to both the student and the parent.

STUDENT HEALTH REQUIREMENTS:

An immunization record is required to enroll a child into voluntary preschool programs that receive funding from the Iowa Department of Education.

Children enrolling into Kindergarten must provide an immunization record, have a dental screening, have a lead test, and vision screening. A second vision screening is required for students entering the third grade.

In the seventh grade students must have updated vaccines: Tetanus, Diphtheria, Pertussis (Tdap), and Meningococcal conjugate vaccine (A, C, W, Y) Ninth grade students must have a second dental screening.

In the twelfth grade students must have a second dose of Meningococcal conjugate vaccine (A, C, W, Y).

PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCES

These conferences are opportunities for teachers and parents to discuss the progress of the student at different points during the year.

SCHOOL'S RESPONSIBILITIES:

Your school will announce when the conferences will occur. You may be asked to make an appointment with a teacher first. If you need an interpreter during this meeting contact the school. If you are unable to attend the conferences at their scheduled meetings due to work, ask the school if you can set up alternative days to meet.

PARENT'S RESPONSIBILITIES:

It's highly recommended that parents attend these meetings as it has been shown that increased involvement in their child's academics can have a positive impact on their future.

WHAT YOU CAN DO BEFORE THE MEETING:

Talk with your child

Not all children like to talk about their experiences at school but it's important to get their perspective on their education. Try to get an understanding of what they like and dislike about school, what their relationship is with their teachers, and who they engage with socially. Ask then open-ended questions, or questions they can't give a single worded answer to.

Examples of questions to ask your child:

What was the best thing you did at school?

What was the most interesting thing your teacher said today?

What do you and your friends like to do at recess?

Make a list of questions to ask

Here are examples:

What is my child expected to learn this year?

How will this be evaluated?

What are my child's strongest and weakest subjects?

What are examples of these strengths and weaknesses?

Does my child hand homework in on time?

What types of tests and evaluations will my child have to take this year?

How are my child's test-taking skills?

Is my child participating in class discussions and activities?

How are my child's social skills?

Does my child seem happy at school?

Have you noticed any unusual behaviors?

Has my child missed any classes other than excused absences?

Do you think my child is reaching their potential?

What can I do at home to help support my child's academic progress?

DURING THE CONFERENCE

Ask the most important questions first

These meetings are often not very long. Make sure you get your most pressing questions asked first. If you still need more time to discuss issues or you did not get through all of your questions, ask to have another meeting with the teacher.

Decide next steps

Discuss with the teacher how you will continue to keep in contact. If you discussed your child needing extra help ask how you will be updated on the success.

AFTER THE CONFERENCE

Update your child

Make sure to share with your child any positive feedback you received from the teacher.

SCHOOL STRUCTURE

IOWA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

a group made up of elected community members who make the majority of decisions for a school district.

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

he Iowa Department of Education set the standards for all public schools in Iowa.

AREA EDUCATION AGENCIES (AEA)

They work with Area Education Agencies (AEAs) that provide school improvement services for students, families, teachers, administrators, and their communities. There are nine AEAs that divide the state into regions.

Central Rivers AEA

Grant Wood AEA

Great Prairie AEA

Green Hills AEA

Heartland AEA

Keystone AEA

Mississippi Bend AEA

Northwest AEA

Prairie Lakes AEA

LOCAL EDUCATION AGENCY

Individual school buildings are part of local school districts. As of 2019 there are 367 school districts in the state. The school districts are run by superintendents who coordinate with the principles of each of the schools within their district. Those principles are then responsible for all staff within their schools which include teachers, paraeducators, and staff. Each school district should have a directory on their website where you can search for specific individuals.

SCHOOL PERSONNEL

Superintendent: in charge of overseeing the daily operations of a school district. They help to make general decisions about policies. They carry out decisions made by the school board.

Principle: in charge of overseeing the daily operations of an individual school building. They oversee all staff and faculty in the school. They often have a closer relationship with the community.

Assistant Principal: Larger schools may often have assistant principals to help in the daily operations of the school.

Athletic Director: oversee all athletic programs either in the district or at an individual school.

SCHOOL PERSONNEL CONT

Classroom Teacher: responsible for providing the students they serve with direct instruction in the area of content in which they specialize. The teacher is expected to use the district-approved curriculum to meet state goals within that content area. The teacher should build relationships with the parents of children they teach.

Teaching Assistant/Aide: A teacher's aide helps a classroom teacher in a variety of areas that can include making copies, grading papers, working with small groups of students, contacting parents, and a variety of other tasks.

Special Education Teacher: responsible for providing the students they serve with direct instruction in the area of content with which the student has an identified learning disability. The special education teacher writes, reviews, and carries out all Individual Education Plans (IEP) for students served. They also are responsible for scheduling meetings for IEP's.

Paraprofessional: a trained individual who helps a special education teacher with their day-to-day operations. A paraprofessional may be assigned to one particular student or may help with a class a whole. A paraprofessional works in support of the teacher and does not provide direct instruction.

Counselor: A counselor's job is often multifaceted. A counselor provides counseling services for students who may struggle academically, have a rough home life, may have gone through a difficult situation, etc. A counselor helps with setting student schedules, getting students scholarships, preparing them for life after high school, etc.

Librarian/Media Specialist: A library/media specialist oversees the operation of the library including the organization, ordering of books, checking out books, the return of books, and re-shelving of books. The library media specialist also works directly with the classroom teachers to provide help in anything associated with the library. They also are responsible for teaching students library related skills and creating programs that develop lifelong readers.

Nurse: provides general first aid for students in the school. The nurse may also administer medication to students who need it or are required medication. A school nurse keeps pertinent records on when they see students, what they saw, and how they treated it. A school nurse may also teach students about health and health-related issues.

Administrative Assistant/Secretary: An administrative assistant an important position within in the school. A school administrative assistant often knows the day-to-day operations of a school as well as anyone. They are also the person who communicates most often with parents. Their job includes answering phones, mailing letters, organizing files, and a host of other duties. Schools may have multiple assistants. Each school building will have their own administrative assistant.

School Nutritionist: A school nutritionist handles creating a menu that meets state nutrition standards for all meals served at school. They are also responsible for ordering the food that will be served. They also collect and keep up with all monies taken in and spent by the nutrition program. A school nutritionist is also responsible for keeping track of which students are eating and for which students qualify for free/reduced lunches.

SCHOOL PERSONNEL CONT

Cook: A cook prepares and serves food to the entire school. A cook is also responsible for the process of cleaning up the kitchen and the cafeteria

Coach: oversees the day to day operations of a specific sports program. Their duties can include organizing practice, scheduling, ordering equipment, and coaching games. They are also in charge of specific game planning including scouting, game strategy, substitution patterns, player discipline, etc.

Custodian: Handles the day-to-day cleaning of the school building as a whole. Their duties include vacuuming, sweeping, mopping, cleaning bathrooms, emptying trash, etc. They may also help in other areas such as mowing, moving heavy items, etc.

Bus Driver: A bus driver provides safe transportation for students to and from school. (1)

MANDATORY REPORTERS

Someone who is a mandatory reporter is required by law to report any suspected child abuse. Within a school some of these people may be school social workers, school psychologist, coaches, and licensed teachers. (2)

Though these are individuals required to report child abuse, any adult may make a report if they suspect a child is being abused. Often these incidents are reported to the Department of Human Services.

CITATIONS

(1) <https://www.thoughtco.com/a-comprehensive-breakdown-of-the-roles-of-school-personnel-3194684>

(2) Iowa Code 232.69

SCHOOL COUNSELING

School counseling is available for students that provide them with guidance in curriculum, supporting students through academic planning and providing them with responsive services and a support system.

COUNSELORS

School counselors are not the same as school psychologists or therapists. They can offer students short term counseling for issues such as attendance and those with disciplinary issues. If the counselor is unable to address the students needs they should refer them to long-term services with in school or out of school personnel.

MENTAL HEALTH

Description

TITLE

text

ACADEMICS

Description

GPA

GPA is short for grade point average, which is a way to calculate a child's performance in school. A high GPA can help students get scholarships, grants and other awards.

A student's GPA is calculated based on grades given for homework, tests, attendance, and class behavior in all of their classes. Report cards should be sent home regularly to show how well a student is doing in each individual class.

How a GPA is calculated:

Letter grades are converted into grade points. Each school handles GPAs differently; a common example is:

A = 4.0

B = 3.0

C = 2.0

D = 1.0

Grade points are multiplied by the amount of credit each class is worth. (Typically, each semester-long high school course is worth 0.5 credits.)

The result is the number of grade points earned.

Grade points are added together and divided by the number of credits a student tried to earn during the semester.

The result is the students grade point average.

Remember, schools may handle grade points differently, so check with your school counselor or advisor for the students actual GPA.

ADVANCED PLACEMENT (AP)

Advanced Placement courses are college-level studies that are available to high school students. Students can choose from 37 classes in 22 subject areas. Each class has an optional exam at the end of the course. If they pass these tests they may be able to gain credits for college. There is a fee associated with taking an AP course

The grading for AP tests is a number range, one to five (1 to 5), with five being the best score. Students who attend Iowa schools that don't offer AP classes on-site can take AP classes through the Iowa Online AP Academy. Students enroll in online courses through their local school district. (1)

GIFTED AND TALENTED/EXTENDED LEARNING PROGRAMS/TAG:

All public schools are required to offer a gifted and talented program. Children who are defined as talented and gifted have shown achievement or potential ability in any one or more of the following:

- General intellectual ability
- Creative thinking
- Leadership ability
- Visual and performing arts ability
- Specific ability aptitude

Each student in this program must have an individualized plan to meet that student's need for instruction. Parents should meet with teachers to discuss the student's plan.

DRIVERS EDUCATION

Many schools offer driver's education programs that students can enroll in to learn to drive and eventually obtain their license. The program teaches students safe driving, Iowa traffic laws, alcohol and drug abuse awareness, and other important lessons. There is both classroom learning and behind-the-wheel training.

CITATIONS

(1) <https://educateiowa.gov/pk-12/advanced-learning-opportunities/advanced-placement-courses>

(2)
<https://educateiowa.gov/sites/files/ed/documents/Gifted%20and%20Talented%20FAQ.pdf>

EXTRACURRICULARS

These are activities that students may take part in that are not a part of the official school curriculum. Students are not required to take part in these activities but it's highly recommended. Often extracurriculars can build up a students skills in other areas, provide them with extra support, given them productive things to do before or after school, and help them build their resumes for the future. There are sometimes extra fees or costs associated with these activities and may require other assistance from the family like transportation or time.

FINE ARTS

Students have the opportunity to build their artistic skills in many ways. Not all schools will have the same programs available. Some classes a school may offer for fine arts can include:

- Band
- Choir
- Theater
- Dance
- Visual Art
- Media Art

While some of these can be taken as classes for students, they may also require extra commitment outside of the classroom. These programs may have extra costs associated with them.

ATHLETICS

Like fine arts, not all schools will have the same programs available. Students have the opportunity to join various sports throughout the year. Sports are played in seasons, so they do not all occur during the full year. Not all schools will have all sports available depending on their size. Students may also join community sports clubs if they wish to play. To qualify to play a school sport students are required to get physicals done and forms signed by licensed professionals. For information on this process contact your schools athletic director or head coach for the sport your child wishes to join. There may be extra costs for certain sports that require specialized equipment or uniforms.

Examples of some sports offered in Iowa schools:

- Soccer
- Football
- Baseball
- Softball
- Tennis
- Golf
- Basketball
- Volleyball
- Swimming
- Track and Field
- Cross Country
- Wrestling
- Bowling

CLUBS/STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS

Students have a right to create school groups or organizations and to request consideration for recognition by the school administration. Students are not limited to already existing school organizations. Students have the right to form new clubs and organizations covering any topic or issue that is not illegal.

- In cases where the principal can show that recognition would create a substantial or a material disruption of the academic process, the principal may deny recognition.

TRADITIONS

There are parts of the school experience that deal with more than just academics. Traditions built by communities also have an impact on a student's experience in school.

PROM

A formal dance held by a high school at the end of the academic year, typically for students in their junior or senior year. Students typically wear formal clothing such as dresses and suits. However, a student can wear whatever they want as long as it follows their school's current dress code. Traditionally students take a date to prom. One student will get a corsage for the other, which is a flower worn on the wrist or on your chest.

HOMECOMING

Homecoming is a time to celebrate the school you're attending. Homecoming usually centers on a football game, but schools have been known to have homecoming basketball, soccer, or even hockey games. It's an annual tradition for most American high schools and most colleges and universities, too.

There are a ton of activities that center around homecoming, and they vary from school to school. The celebrations generally start at the school with current students on Monday and last all the way through the weekend.

Spirit Week: Many schools kick off their homecoming celebrations with Spirit Week. Starting on Monday, each day of the week is themed, and students are encouraged to participate. For example, Monday could be "crazy hair day," Tuesday could be "rent a senior" day, Wednesday could be "wear your pajamas to school day." Schools may have competitions among the classes to see who has the most school spirit.

Pep Rally: A pep rally is a time for all the students at the school to gather and cheer on their sports team.

Cheerleaders, the color guard, and marching band generally perform, and of course, the sports team makes an appearance. Everyone cheers and makes as much noise as possible to psych up their team so they'll crush the competition at the game.

Homecoming Game: The game most often played for homecoming is football, and that is the main homecoming attraction; it's very often preceded by a tailgate.

Both current students and alumni attend. There's generally a huge crowd and lots of energy and excitement, so the pressure is on for the home team to win. If a school doesn't have a football team, the game might be basketball, soccer, or hockey. A tailgate often precedes the homecoming game.

HOMECOMING CONT

Homecoming Parade: Towns often stage a homecoming parade with floats, the school marching band, sports teams, and classic cars. It's a time for the whole town and even former residents to rally together, socialize, cheer on the football team, and celebrate their town and high school.

Homecoming Dance: A homecoming dance is just for the students of the school, and it usually occurs on the Friday or Saturday night after Spirit Week, depending, of course, on when the big game is. It's usually open to every student no matter what grade they're in. The dance may be casual, while others make it a semi-formal affair. There's

Homecoming Court: Schools hold elections for a homecoming king and queen with a homecoming court of princes and princesses. Homecoming court elections differ from school to school, but it generally goes down like this: The king and queen are upperclassmen (juniors or seniors), while the court is lowerclassmen. Since homecoming is all about school spirit, the students elected to the court are usually pretty involved in school activities. They are often on sports teams and are cheerleaders. They also could be students who are in lots of clubs or involved in social activities.

HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION

Graduation ceremonies are held to present the students to the community and recognize their achievements. Students wear caps and gowns that are either rented or bought by families. A tassel is worn on the cap where it starts on the left side and is then moved to the right during the ceremony once the student has graduated. Student file in by alphabetical order according to last name and sit in a large auditorium or hall. The song 'Pomp and Circumstance' is played either on speakers or by the school band. If the student is a part of the band they may be able to play with then band then move to sit in their seats for graduation. There are generally several speakers that are there to address the students. There is also usually one student chosen to speak on behalf of the graduating class. Students are called up to receive their diploma and walk across the stage. They shake hands with the administrators and get their picture taken. The diploma they are given is usually only a stand in, the real diploma is sent later once it has been confirmed that the student has fulfilled all of their requirements. Students will have the opportunity to practice the ceremony once or twice before the actual day.

HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION CONT

Graduation parties: They are often held by the families of the students graduating. Families will decorate with pictures of their students and their progression through the years. They may want to highlight certain academic accomplishments or major moments in the student's life. Food and drinks are often served and games may be played. Guests are sometimes expected to give a letter or money to the graduate as a way to say congratulations. Some families may have photo shoots then share the pictures with friends and family. It's common that many families have their graduation parties on the same day or the same weekend. Guests will often go around to various parties of those they know and stay only a while at each.

RESOURCES